

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

PART I. Purpose of and Need for Action

1. Project Title: Ruby Valley Gun Club, Inc.

2. Type of Proposed Action: (1) Improve and construct road
(2) Build trap house
(3) Construct sidewalks
(4) Construct Rifle/Pistol range
(5) Install electric to range facilities
(6) Drill and install well
(7) Concrete foundation & handicapped accessible walks for latrine.
(8) Construct and install septic system
(9) Install security fencing and gates
(10) Purchase and set up of steel storage container

3. Location Affected by Proposed Action The proposed Ruby Valley Gun Club is located 2.7 miles southeast of Twin Bridges and 5.9 miles northwest of Sheridan, Montana. It is on a tract of land being situated in NW1/4 NW 1/4 of Section 7, Township 4 South, Range 5 West, M.P.M., Madison County, Montana. Said tract of land being approximately 23 total acres in size which acreage includes and area approximately 5 acres in size where facilities will be located and an area approximately 18 acres in size for a shot fall zone. The additional 18 acres for the shot fall zone will be retained by the former owner with an easement granted to the club in perpetuity.

4. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action: MCA87-1-276 through 87-1-279 (Legislative established policies and procedures for the establishment and improvement of shooting ranges) MCA87-2-105 (Departmental authority to expend funds to provide training in the safe handling and use of firearms and safe hunting practices). The 2007 Montana Legislature has authorized funding for the establishment of a Shooting Range Development Program providing financial assistance for the development of shooting ranges for public purposes. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks has responsibility for the administration of the program, including the necessary guidelines and procedures governing applications for funding assistance under the program.

5. Need for the Action(s): Continued and increased recreational opportunities to replace a former shooting club of 105 years. There is not another trap or rifle and pistol shooting facility in Madison County and there are also no safe reliable places for hunters to sight-in rifles. Secondary needs are to enhance and promote firearms safety. (See paragraph 10).

6. Objectives for the Action(s): To provide a safe and reliable shooting facility providing both trap and recreational, rifle and pistol shooting. Additional objectives are to provide a facility for Hunter Education, Law Enforcement and youth shooting activities. See para. 5 above.

7. Maps:

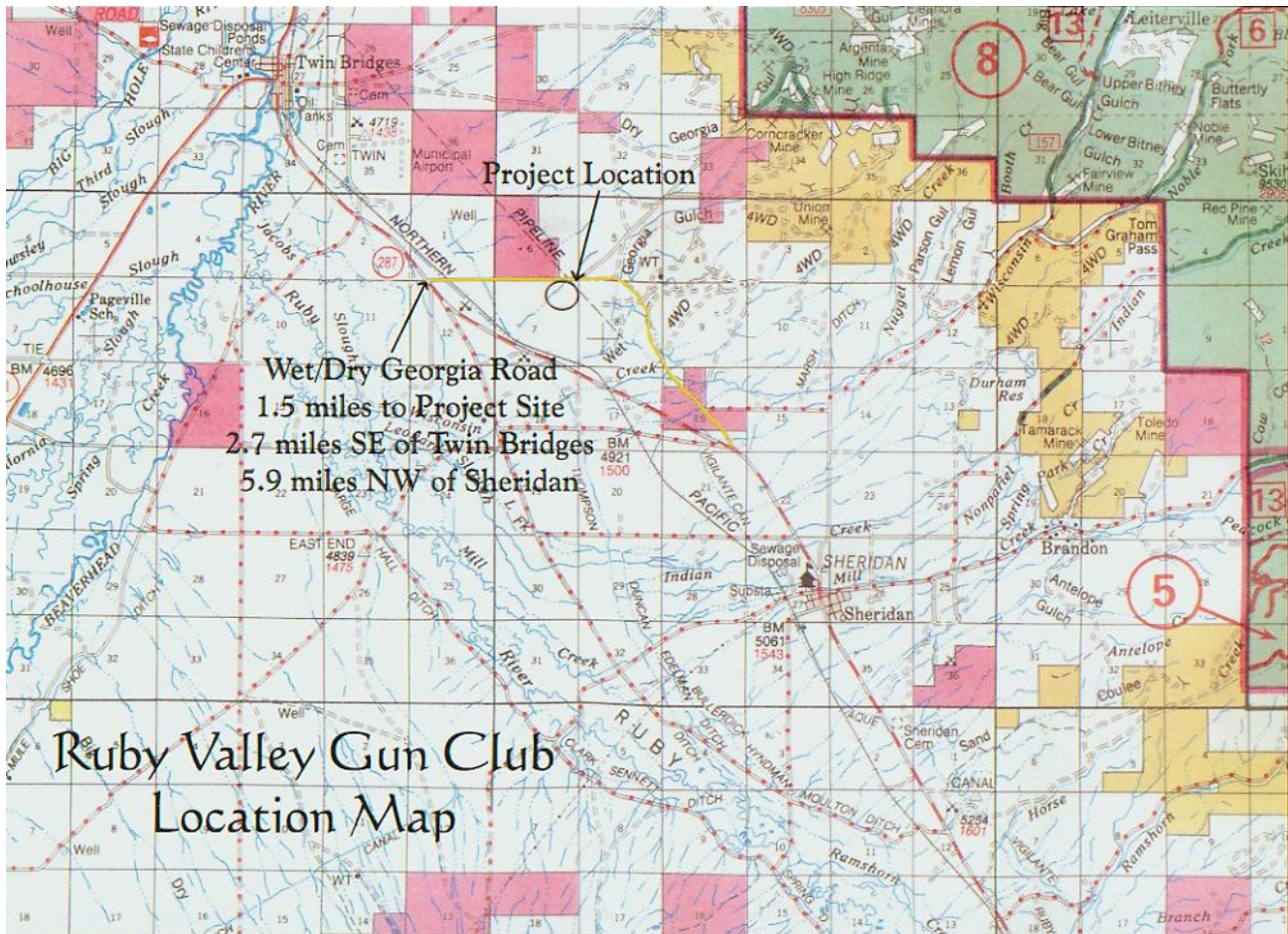


Figure 1 - Proposed Ruby Valley Gun Club Location

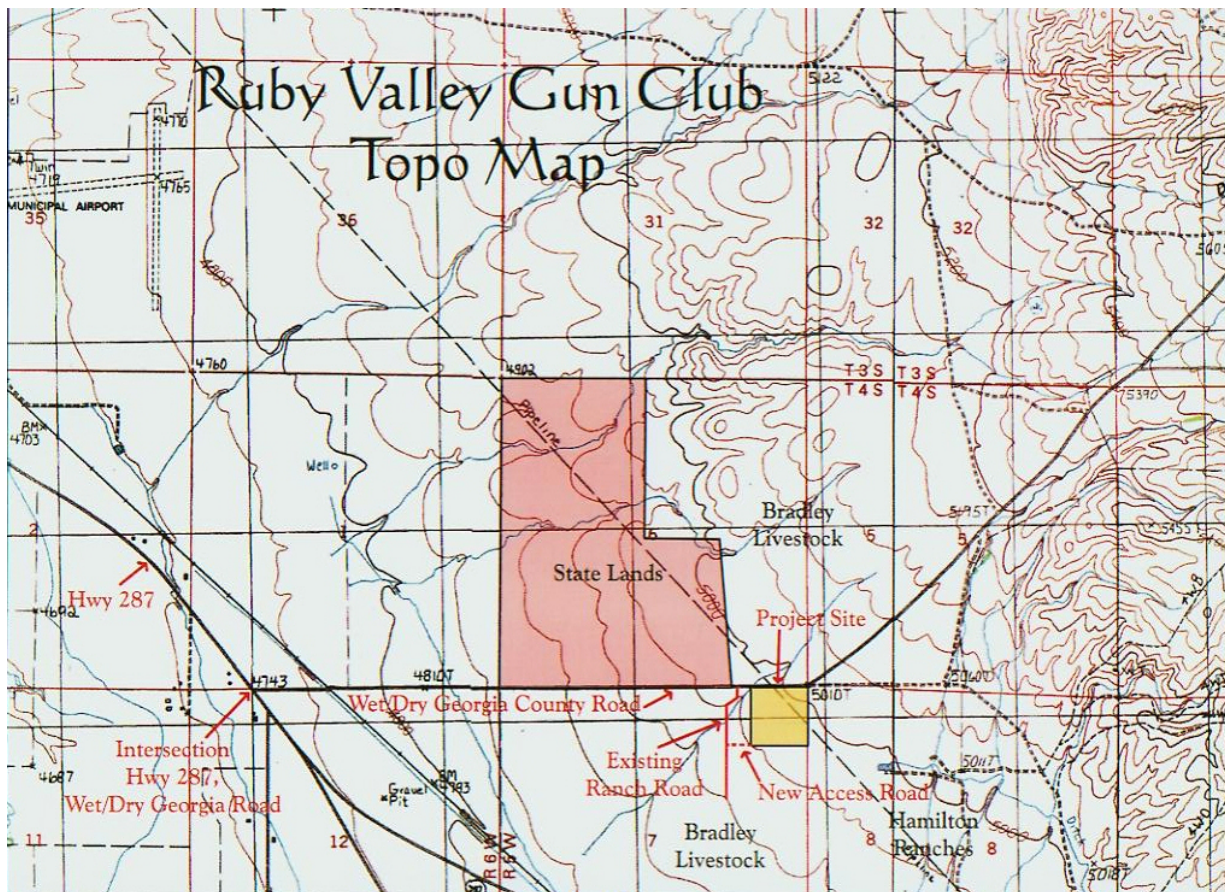


Figure 2 - Topographic map of project site for Ruby Valley Gun Club.

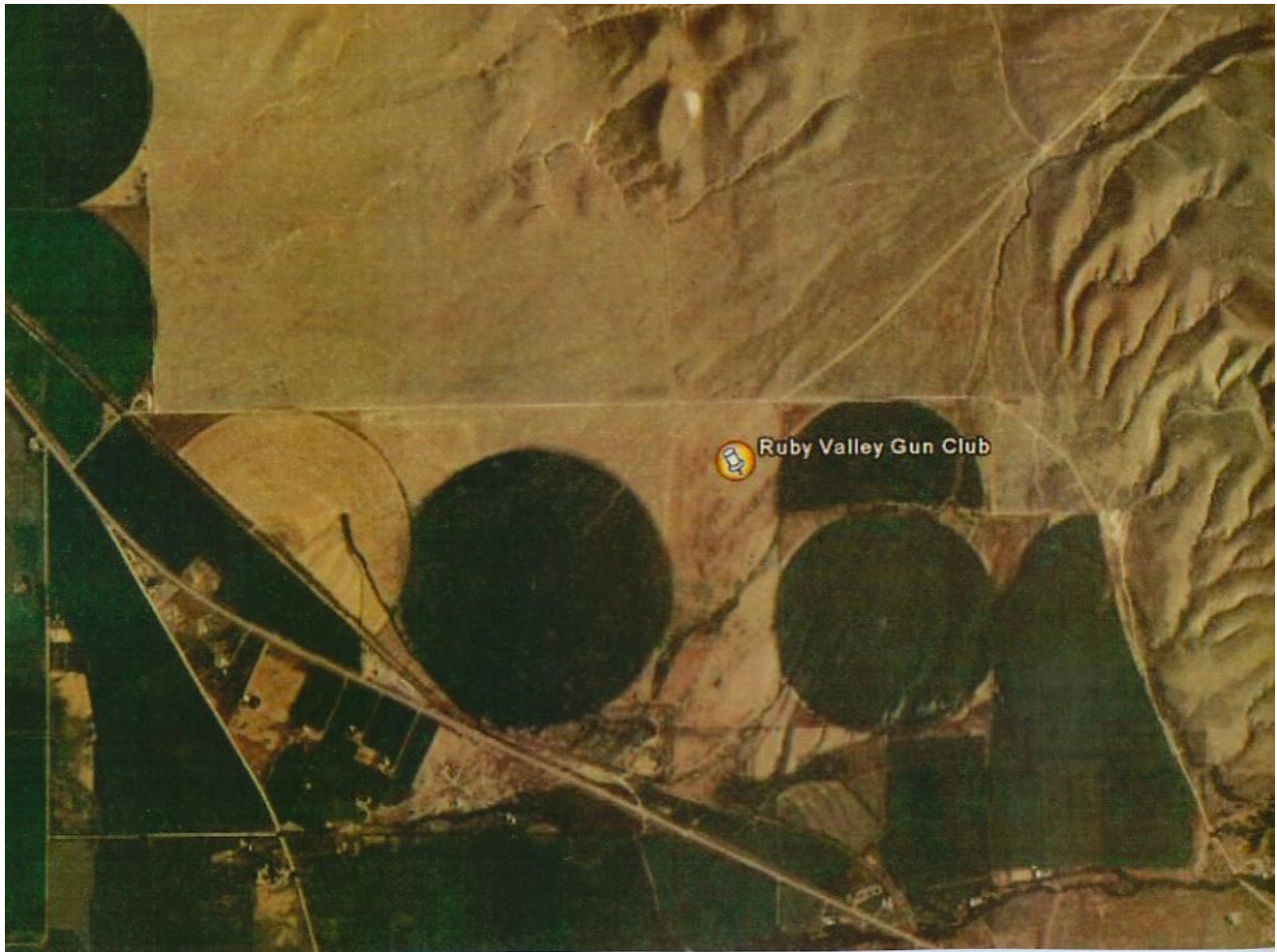


Figure 3 - Proposed gun club location in relation to surrounding agricultural areas.

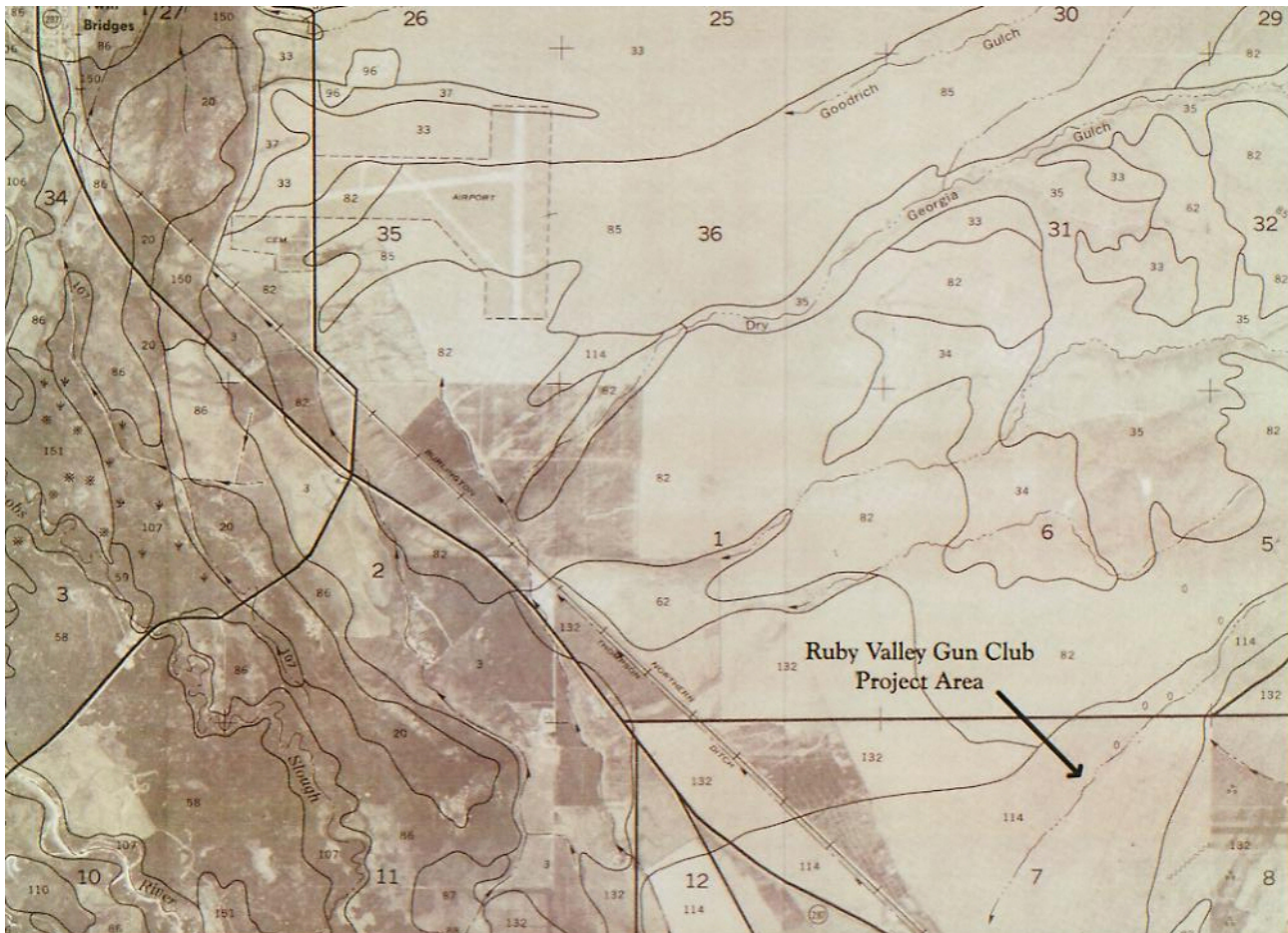


Figure 4 - Soils map around projected gun club area.

8. Project Size: Estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected: Approximately 5 acres of the 23 acre total.

9. Affected Environment (A brief description of the affected area of the proposed project): The area affected for the Ruby Valley Gun Club is located 2.7 miles southeast of Twin Bridges and 5.9 miles northwest of Sheridan, Montana (See Para. 3). The average annual precipitation is approximately 12 inches. The proposed ranges are located in an area that has always been dry land agriculture. With the exception to land to the east (irrigated hay fields by center pivot) all other land is unimproved native pasture land. Lands north, south and to the west is owned by the same rancher providing the site for the new range (See Figure 3). The area is composed primarily of sandy loam soil designated as Scarvo (See Figure 4). The Scarvo is deep well drained soil, with moderately rapid permeability to a depth of about 16 inches and rapid below this depth. The Scarvo soils are located on fans and terraces in the Madison and Ruby valleys.

10. Description of Project:

(1) **Roads:** Grading of an existing ranch road from the county road. Construction of a new road will be approximately 1000 feet in length. Road construction will consist of blazing and grading using existing materials in which to construct a surface suitable for vehicle traffic. A decision will be made if a surface material will be required. Evidence from existing roads does not indicate surface material will be required.

(2) **Trap House Construction:** The layout, survey and construction of a concrete trap house partially below grade that will house the trap throwing machine, targets and controls. This will include construction of concrete walkways for shooting stations. Construction will meet the ATA specifications.

(3) **Sidewalks:** Construct a 4 foot wide concrete sidewalk running the width of trap house for handicapped accessibility to the shooting stations. Construct a second 4-foot sidewalk running from trap house #1 to the future location of trap house #2.

(4) **Rifle/Pistol Range:** Construction of 18 foot wide by 8 foot high back stop constructed of 2 ft. x 2 ft. x 6 ft. concrete blocks lined with 8"x8" railroad ties. Construction of shooting benches located 100 yards from the backstop.

(5) **Electrical:** Electrical work includes primary service provided by North Western Energy to Club provided meter pole. Installation of the underground electric service will be to the central facilities' location. This will also include installation of 200-amp service breaker box on a pole located near the restrooms. Additionally there will also be installation of the underground service to the trap house and restrooms, including the wiring of all equipment. Electrical connection to domestic water well. All work to be performed by a licensed electrician per Montana Code and required permits.

(6) **Domestic Water Well:** Drill, case and install submersible pump, drop pipe, wiring and frost-free hydrant and pressure tank.

(7) **Restrooms:** Construction of concrete foundation to place existing restrooms moved from prior club grounds in Sheridan. This will also include construction of handicapped accessibility sidewalks or ramps to the restrooms.

(8) **Septic System:** Construction and installation of 1000-gallon concrete septic tank with 200 feet of drain field for restrooms and future clubhouse.

(9) **Security Fencing:** Construct 2300 feet of perimeter 4 strand barbed wire fence around the shooting range. This will also include installation of 16-foot entrance gate that can be locked and two 4-foot man gates accessing the drop zone area of the trap range for target setting.

(10) **Storage:** Purchase and install a steel storage trailer/container for storage of targets, range equipment and member's property.

11. List any Other Local, State, or Federal Agency that has Overlapping or Additional Jurisdiction:

(a) Permits, Licenses and/or Authorizations:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>
Montana Building Standards Division	Restroom Foundation
Madison County Dept. of Health	Septic tank and drain field

Funding:

Agency Name	Funding Amount
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$37,422.00

12. Affiliations, Cooperating Agencies, User Groups and/or Supporting Groups: After the 105 year history of the Ruby Rod & Gun Club the organization has hosted and supported many groups in the community, i.e. Boy Scouts, 4-H, Hunter Education, local fishing lodges, etc. Additionally the club has hosted two turkey shoots around Thanksgiving and Christmas each year and four Amateur Trapshooting Association (ATA) registered tournaments. The club is associated with the ATA and the Montana State Trap Shooting Association. It is forecasted that the addition of the rifle and pistol ranges will further increase membership and range usage.

13. History of the Planning and Scoping Process, and Any Public Involvement: Prior to the Shooting Range Development Program grant approval, the proposed range improvements and safety enhancements had been discussed within the membership of the club and with the associated project vendors and contractors. Additional public involvement will be held in late July or early August.

14. List of Agencies Consulted/Contacted During Preparation of the EA:

- Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

15. Name, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor:

Jack Kaatz
P.O. Box 312
Sheridan, MT 59749
842-5960
vigilant@3rivers.net

16. Other Pertinent Information: The club at this time does not own the land and for the interim (until transfer can occur) will lease the land. The club is in the process of entering into a lease agreement until such time the property can be surveyed and deeds prepared.

A public meeting will be held in late July or early August, now that official notification has been received that grant proposal has been approved. The Club has in the last year held a number of meetings with club members. Support from non-members throughout the valley has been nothing but positive with countless offers from area citizens for assistance in the form of offering labor, equipment, professional skills (surveys) and other in-kind donations to the project.

Shooting range applications require the participant's governing body to approve by resolution its submission of applications for shooting range funding assistance. Resolution Date: March 30, 2007.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Abbreviated Checklist - The degree and intensity determines extent of Environmental Review. An abbreviated checklist may be used for those projects that are not complex, controversial, or are not in environmental sensitive areas)

Table 1. Potential impact on physical environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				X		
2. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats				X		#2
3. Introduction of new species into an area				X		
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality				X		
5. Water quality, quantity & distribution (surface or groundwater)				X		#5
6. Existing water right or reservation				X		
7. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture				X		#7
8. Air quality or objectionable odors				X		
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		
10. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
11. Aesthetics				X		

Comments (A description of potentially significant, or unknown, impacts and potential alternatives for mitigation must be provided.)

2. & 5. There are no delineated wetlands and no natural water sources within the area proposed for development.

7. Soil disruption for this site is very localized. Erosion control measures will be instituted and where appropriate disturbed areas will be reseeded.

Table 2. Potential impacts on human environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Social structures and cultural diversity				X		
2. Changes in existing public benefits provided by wildlife populations and/or habitat				X		
3. Local and state tax base and tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural production				X		#4
5. Human health				X		#5
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				X		
7. Access to & quality of recreational activities				X		#7
8. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals (ordinances)				X		
9. Distribution & density of population and housing				X		#9
10. Demands for government services				X		
11. Industrial and/or commercial activity				X		

Comments (A description of potentially significant, or unknown, impacts and potential alternatives for mitigation must be provided.)

4. This area has always been dry rangeland (agricultural). Land usage north, south, and west is dry range land (agriculture). The land to the east is irrigated hay fields by center pivot. All other land is unimproved native pasture land. Lands north, south and to the west are owned by the same rancher who is providing the easement for the range. Land to the west (irrigated pivot) is owned by one of the largest land owners in the Valley. Grazing will continue on the 18 acre shot drop zone. The 5 +/- acres where the facilities will be located will be fenced to keep livestock out.

5. Range site plans; construction and the ongoing operational and maintenance plans meets ATA and National Rifle Association's Shooting Range Standards. Safety for participants and the public at large will also conform to the above industry standards.

7. The range will provide year round controlled access, meeting the standards for range security and also safety design standards. These ranges will accommodate the needs of a variety of users, such as, law enforcement, hunter education, bow-hunter safety, and public shooting.

9. This is a rural area with a low population density and the nearest inhabited dwelling is approximately 2 miles northeast of the site.

Part III. Environmental Consequences

Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects that are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur? No

Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant? No

Identification of the Preferred Alternatives:

- **Alternative A** is as described in paragraph 10 (Description of Project)
 - (1) Improve and construct road
 - (2) Build trap house
 - (3) Construct sidewalks
 - (4) Construct Rifle/Pistol range
 - (5) Install electric to range facilities
 - (6) Drill and install well
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 - (8) Construct and install septic system
 - (9) Install security fencing and gates
 - (10) Purchase and set up of steel storage container
- **Alternative B (No Action Alternative)** area will remain as an unimproved shooting area without construction of safe reliable facilities.

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

Two alternatives have been considered, A (Proposed Alternative) and B (No Action Alternative). There were no other alternatives that were deemed reasonably available, nor prudent.

Neither the proposed alternative (A) nor the no action alternative (B) would have any significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

- There are beneficial consequences for the acceptance of alternatives A to improve shooting sports opportunities, and to provide improved safety and security.
- The No Action Alternative would be not to improve the range and continue on without increased shooting opportunities and improved safety. Shooting would continue on unsupervised and on unimproved and often in unsafe areas. Land use would remain the same. Therefore the proposed alternative is the prudent alternative.

Describe any Alternatives considered and eliminated from Detailed Study:

None

List and explain proposed mitigative measures (stipulations):

None

Individuals or groups contributing to, or commenting on, this EA:

Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks
Jack Kaatz, P.O. Box 312, Sheridan, MT 59749

PART IV. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

All of the pertinent or potential impacts of the project have been reviewed, discussed, and analyzed. None of the projects reviewed were complex, controversial, or located in an environmentally sensitive area. The projects being proposed will be located on 5 acres to be donated via transfer in title to the club in the near future, and also will included an easement in perpetuity on 18 acres for an adjacent shot fall zone. There is merit to the low impact activities and the increased recreational opportunity provided in this proposal. Consequently, this should be considered the final version of this environmental assessment. There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative (A). The 105 year history of the club providing safe and reliable recreational opportunities to its members and the public clearly indicates support for the proposed alternative. Therefore, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks should approve the proposed alternative (A) for improvements to the Ruby Valley Gun Club as outlined in para. 2 & 10.

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Ecological Assessments
Helena, MT 59602

Date Completed: July 30, 2007

PART V. EA CONCLUSION SECTION

Recommendation and justification concerning preparation of EIS:

None Required

Describe public involvement, if any:

None